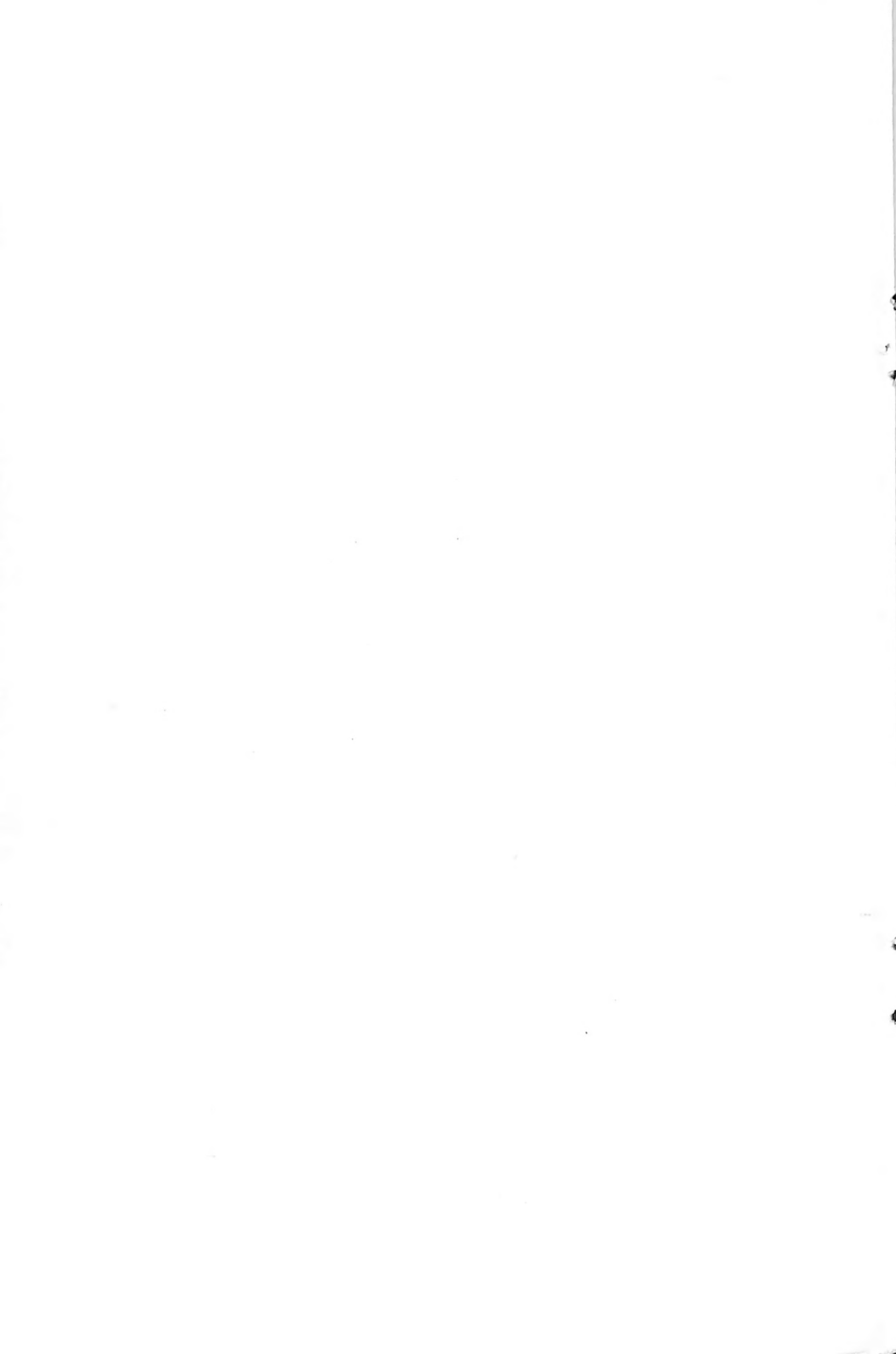


Reflections





REFLECTIONS

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CONTEST

Each year the English Department of Gardner-Webb sponsors a literary contest for the student works chosen for publication in *Reflections*. All works are judged anonymously by the *Reflections* staff and the final judges. This years final judges were professors E. M. Blankenship, Thirlen Osborne and campus minister Richard McBride. Faculty and non-student submissions were not eligible for the contest.

AWARDS

1st place:	L. I. SEA BIRD	Leigh Foglia
2nd place:	ODE OF THE ROAD	Eric Stamey
3rd place:	ABSORPTION PUDDLE	Charlotte Porter
Honorable Mention:	FLUTIST'S CALL	Rebecca Jones
	MYSTICAL WONDER	Beth Miller

MYSTICAL WONDER

The Unicorn
Mysterious and mythical
With his glowing ice white coat
Stands boldly with pride
That shimmers through the ripples
Of the hard, muscular structure.

A glimpse of light-hearted mischief
Is seen in his striking eyes.
Flaring red nostrils
Adhere to his strong will,
Never to be put under
A living soul's mastery.

CHINESE CARVING

The birds awake
stretch, bend in silent grace
walk quietly to the lacquered brook

Dawn comes with gentle speed

The bridge rail
casts shadowed patterns of the craftsman's hands
reaching toward reed grass
growing beneath

A pagoda-roofed pavillion
keeps the evil spirits of ten thousand dragons
from entering the serenity of this garden

Slowly,
emerging from the roughness of the bank
An old man hobbles
on his way to the Great Wall

POEM FOR MY TOES

1

Oh you are ten—
der little piggies

2

Mother always counted
on you; from the market
to the squeel ALLLLLLL
the way home faithful
practical pink piggies

3

footing the bill
of my every whim

4

walking way with my heart

5

under pressure
turning in upon yourselves:
a nail in the flesh
of tender piggies grown

6

tightly held, rubbed
you're horny piggies

7

sometimes allowed
to wander into walls and
wastebaskets to be stubbed

8

innocent bystanders of my confusion

9

in German the word
for gloves is
hand-shoe

10

Go home little piggies let
our fingers
do the walking

THE DREAM OF HORSES

My great field open, even in the deepest snow
of an old man's memory: open to hard
thin vigorous legs and the broad chest
fronting drifts. There will always be a tree
with still one apple, blood in the blinding
white, no higher than the strongest neck.
And a bird to watch and compliment.
The fence is lost all winter. But should I
stumble the meadow, beneath reflecting landscape,
flannel plaid with sugar in my pockets
soft noses know the places where sweetness
can be had. There is never refusal. Horses
fence my way and everything is given.
Then horses snow dance in pleasure, leave
me delighted at the heart of winter
having found at last what a spring
promised when too green to know the truth, I
was still too new to dream. No longer now.

HOW TO MAKE OATMEAL

First . . . roll the box
end over end until you forget
which is the top. Then
struggle furiously for five
minutes trying to take off
the bottom and just as you realize
where the top is
so does the oatmeal.
Fortunately the counter catches
most of the cereal so
it is still palatable if
you don't mind picking out the rice
you spilled yesterday.
Next . . . measure out one cup
of water using a one-fourth
cup measure and throw in
a pinch of salt from the
box. Boil rapidly and when
it's done, eat your fill.

TEA PARTY

red puddles baked
by the sun peel
easily from earth's grasp
"Won't you have some tea?"

pungent herbs chopped
by rusted relics discarded
from Vesta's packaged meal
"Take some more, there's plenty."

splintered limbs toppled
by winter's icing scoop
servings for illusory peers
"Please don't throw me in that briarpatch."

THE SURVIVOR

Are you my albatross . . .
Slung about my neck
as on some ancient ship of lore?

You wander in my shadows . . .
waiting for me to fail.
To lose my way and be lost
. . . forever.

Did I do you some wrong . . .
which you are weary to avenge?
Are the clouds of your making . . .
Do the seas churn because you
wish them so?

Well, do not pride yourself,
For I will ride the stormy seas . . .
and weather the angry clouds.
I will find my way through the murky fog,
and my ship will sail again!

My shadow will be one of welcoming . . .
for you cannot hurt me now.
Follow me, if you please . . .
I will be the survivor!

A FLUTIST'S CALL

Soft, sweet sounds of a silver flute
Drift gently on the wind.
As slowly I rock in the old porch swing,
With a cool, fresh breeze on my face.
And as I listen to the flutist's tender notes,
A scent of cherry lingers in the air.
The pink and white blossoms fresh with dew
dotting yonder hills.
And the silver notes keep drifting clear,
Like crystal drops of rain.
A Pied Piper beckoning me
To run free through the fragrant fields.
Skipping stones in a splashing brook,
Overhung with willows, graceful green.
But I just sit here and gently rock,
In the creaking, old porch swing.

ODE OF THE ROAD

Upon the stretching asphalt black
The splattered entrails lay,
An accidental aftermath
From early in the day,
The intermingled blood and fur
Enhancing every part,
Appear to every passerby
A fatal work of art,
Some change their course to miss the mass
Avoiding further scatter,
Others coldly pass across
And make the figure flatter.

AUGUSTAN

I have been on familiar terms with the dead,
and have been received with great courtesy
and presence of mind: Swift, for example,
will admit you to his room
where savage indignation no longer
rips his flesh, and speaks quite calmly
of Stella:

“Notice this keepsake,
fashioned of glass, after the style
of the human heart. What's inside?
Why, sir, there is nothing. Only the lock
of a woman's hair.”

All passion, all grief
is long put off. Formality alone
remains. Formality, a sense of form,
and presence of mind: these alone remain.

GARDEN

An inch-worm measure
one self. Precisely.
Reserving
all his wormy scorn for
butterflies
those gaudy schizophrenics.

THE PASSION OF ROBERT SOUTHWELL

Poet and Missionary, 1586—1592:
Put To The Rack and Executed, 1595

Look you, great executioner,
your wheel's but death's outward show:
man's carnal machine, shedding blood
whereby is quickened dark design
pulleys, gears, wormscrews of life;
thus crooked Adam with broken back
broke again new Adam finds:
naked, rack'd, God's circled man!
 unbent to woe,
 unbroke to strife.
To the limit, then Lord, let me render:
Ah, Jesu! How tendons crack.

THE TROUBLE WITH EDEN

There's that in God which says,
 Thou shall not trespass;
And there's that in man which says,
 I will step on the grass.

I DREAM TO BE ... MYSELF

I spend my whole day dreaming
of what others want me to be.
I try to mold myself
into the shape they want for me.
But am I really happy,
or just hiding behind another face?
I reflect in the world's giant mirror
searching for my own place.

I may not reach the world's expectations.
I may not claim first prize.
But does it really matter
as long as I can be myself,
and I like what's inside?

GLOSSY IMPRESSION

If pictures could come
alive, and step
from the glossy imprisonment,
I would like to meet you. Tell
me your life story
by this stilled moment
in time,
if not by words.

A simple peanut vender not
so ordinary. The stand
not elite but proud. A style
carried over by the man himself.
Tragic wisdom has
its mark
on your face. Blinded
eyes but yet you
see. A conqueror
you live. The
picture faded
with time. Stand
long gone but the impression
left to this grandson shall
live on.

ODE TO MY HAIR

You sprout
a crop only
to see it wither
like golden wheat
in an Autumn
field. Day by
day it leaves less to
comb. Less to
harvest. When
the season sets
in you leave,
but no seeds
grow anew.

Krista Colle

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

Alone—give me my thoughts
Combine, Reflect, Retrieve
Ride with me to newfound worlds.
Content with us three.

Lonely—give me my thoughts
Confuse, Repress, Retreat
Ride with me to places well known.
Bitter with us three.

SMELT RUN

The gulls whirled frantic low to the surf.
Beyond the breaching water limit, kneedeep
in the glassy gold foam-floating waves,
the silver-fish flew green around me.
Smelt run: vivid in the water, they dart
faster than I live; they are totally elusive.
Dry, beach wandering, my eyes to the bright
voracious birds,
my foot was startled by a jump and a thrashing—
a lone fish struggling, sand-coarse already.
His life of water-inches had thinned to air.
My fear of slick fishness fought this awful watch
of dying. I bent to save him, but he was tight
in his own struggle. I was not saviour, only darkness;
He exploded fighting as I touched him, and slipped away.
His green scales slicked my finger, and flecked the sand;
when he lay still at last he faded silver.
The hard grains against his body pricked
uneasy my own mind; I felt us far from home.
I wished for him a glint of eye, a white fine wing,
a better slide to stop a swift gull hunger.

WAVES

As the sands on the ocean's shore shine
with love in the golden hue of evening's light,
love washes in on the breaking waves of
the rushing tide that rises upon the shore.
Waves wash in, as the sun slowly sets with
quiet murmurs of love to put to rest.
Rushing out again, as the moon slowly rises
in the evening sky, with the oldness of day
washed from the shining sands of the
shore, with murmurs of love left in
the sands of the shore to soften the
hard-cold blows of this uncaring world.
The lights of evening are leaving now and
the rising of the sun brings rays to
make the shore long for the peace of
the evening's light and golden hue.

THE BARREN WAY

With numbness and vacuous eyes we stand
and look at the fig tree.

We listen for sounds to make tolerable the
day that begins with no fruit.

The voice on the radio announces the news
with devastating finality

That makes the dreams of young people
remote and useless.

The thirsty brain and the hungry soul
bespeak a barren dryness.

Can these dry bones move and speak again?
Can moisture revive the dry plant?

The news gives place to music—music with
a beat.

The beat seems discordant—meaningless
at first,

But it catches hold and hangs on.

It gives evidence that there is life.

Listen for life! The life is in the sound. Listen, and move.
Disco, rock, punk or junk to soothe the discontent.

It makes us aware that we are here

It shows us the way in and out

And enables us to face the desert dry.

CHUGGING ALONG

Chugging along in an old model car
Asphalt no fault please insure
Kuralt Mudd on the road
Pot holes lug wrenches bad luck trail
White lines yellow lines wind and rain together
Grease and oil make a round wheel slide
Gasoline engine shaking apart
All going one way
Luck leading the pack
Buzzards keeping pace right from the start
Chug-a-lug Chug-a-lug
I soon have to stop.
Cemetery before the next up-hill
Chug-a-lug-Chug-a-lug-Chug-a-lug. Chug!

PRAYER

Lord, I would more fully know Thee.

Strike ignorance and preconception from my mind
That I with new-world wonder
Might in thy Word encounter Thee.

Lord, I would better serve Thee.

Fill me with thy Holy Spirit
That I with Pentecostal power
Might minister in thy name.

Lord, I would more purely praise Thee.

Loose this tongue and tune this voice
That I in exalted language
Might proclaim the glory of thy name.

Lord, I would be more like Thee.

Let thy love so flood my heart
That I, child of thy love,
Might love as I am loved.

TO A CHRISTIAN BROTHER

Cynical,

Skeptical,

Pessimistic,

Downcast—

And once you knew yourself a child of the King,

Much favored, much beloved.

Who stole your joy?

Charlotte Porter

ABSORPTION PUDDLE

If I am a sponge

with lots of little holes;

I can easily absorb anything

upon which I alight.

When I've gathered all I'll hold,

and look for more to have,

I find I'm so wet and heavy

that I can't escape my puddle.

MOMENT OF TURNING

The moment of turning, log to flame,
displays the force and direction of winds;
black-red shadows from within
log's embers trace the light and heat
of wood's once sap-flow avenues;
up and back the ridges of wood's grain
flame's discreet forerunners move
cracking the seal of darkened resin caves,
gathering for the leap velvet light-mass
makes, light and heat appearing this time
in the pulse and rhythm of sourwood.

TENDING FIRE

What we are good for
is tending fire, finding
combustible alignments:

green and dry, drafts
touching wood to wood
with air, knots
against split sides

feeding with the measure
that keeps fire going:

giving heat to more than
chimney, interior light
to what is hidden by design.

Leigh Foglia

L.I. SEA BIRD

Long white feathered wings
a sharp eye to the world
he waits, watching.
Then with wings broad
sea wind at his breast,
he ascends
rising to the sky with few strokes.
His grace carries him
into blue immersion.
Early moon guides him on his way
his cockled laughter echoing behind,
long after him.

DISCOVERY

Endeavor in life to discover
those among whom you dwell.

Discovering a person
is perhaps like climbing a mountain.

You must first desire to do it.
You must persevere,
no matter what you may discover,
no matter how difficult
it may at times seem.

You must accept what you discover
as you accept yourself
for 'tis not your place to judge.

Do these things,
and you will discover
a great treasure
atop the lofty peak.

A friend.



"THE LAUGH OF A CLOWN!"

Inside the big top
Enclosed-Bounded-and Encased
Are the laughs of a Clown
Captured in three ringed circles.

The busy sound of happiness
Constantly performing
To children of all ages
And grownups too!
Providing joy and laughter

Bright Bouncy Balloons
Attractive colored patched costumes
The variety of unique props
Aromas of peanuts-popcorn-hotdogs
The sweet smell of cotton candy

A face of glittering creative beauty
Shades of Nose red
Flowering pastels
Tones of blue, yellow and green.

The laugh of a clown is the laugh of others.

AT THE CUTLER RIDGE MALL

I used to write on napkins
 During the lunchbreak
To get away from the world of pantyhose
 And Chanel #5.
The symphony of heels, buying
 And selling were always
Just over my shoulder
 And I would lean in to hear
The fountain fall.

I don't remember exactly
 What I wrote that day, though
I know the napkin
 Smelled like chicken
And the fountain wall
 Was naked without
Water, being cleaned.
 That day, I heard
the Piped-in music
 And wondered
If it had been there
 All along, over the intercom.

MR. PRINGLE'S NEW LIFE

On the morning after he had finished his Christmas shopping, Chadbourne P. Pringle squinted at the reflection in the bathroom mirror and decided to make some changes in his life. It is fortunate that Miriam Pringle was not present to witness the declaration or that Mother Pringle, a widow who lived across town, had not been informed of her son's intentions. Miriam was a jittery speck of a woman who had devised clever ways of concealing her feelings, and Mother Pringle was devoted to stability and continuity matched by a strong suspicion of spontaneity.

Even Mr. Pringle himself was astounded that he was entertaining such thoughts and at first tried to blame yesterday's debacle at Epson's for his restiveness. He had worked as a teller at Security Bank and Trust Company for twenty-six years, a position in which he had established himself and resisted promotion. Mr. Pringle felt comfortable in his window. He looked through it each day at dozens of faces mounted above hands pushing transactions at him. Chadbourne Pringle was a paragon of punctuality and endurance, the apotheosis of middle-aged men who have mastered a skill and spent a lifetime repeating it. He had great faith in paper and figures, computers and passbooks. Had he made an error, Mr. Angleton, the manager, would have looked elsewhere to assign blame. Mr. Pringle had refined all the correct smiles and frowns, the eye movements and articulations. As Mrs. Dolby in the next window put it, "Mr. Pringle makes this bank run like a bank should."

All their married life, Chadbourne and Miriam Pringle had lived in the same house in the same town. Quite early, Mrs. Pringle had fallen under the influence of Mother Pringle, whose own husband had retired at sixty and taken up genealogy. Two years later, while haunting a cemetery in hopes of aligning himself with an earl, Oliver Pringle had slipped on wet grass and struck his head on the tombstone of one Malcolm Sourley. Death had been instantaneous, a fact that gave Mother Pringle considerable comfort. So unnerved was she by the older woman's recurring accounts of the affair that Miriam became convinced of her own husband's destiny with a strange death and resolved to prevent it at all costs.

Thus it was that Miriam Pringle began to sense dangers even in life's

lighted rooms. And thus it was that Mr. Pringle for the first time became irritated with his wife. It all began with the curtain-cord caper. Above their bed hung the cord, which often dangled over the headboard above the slumbering Mr. Pringle. When his wife began to move the cord, Chadbourne was merely perplexed. Then, as an experiment, he began to replace the cord only to find that while he was sleeping she had once more positioned it behind the headboard. Miriam, of course, was convinced that in his sleep her husband might become entangled and hang himself. Mr. Pringle, understanding none of this, decided that principle was at stake and informed his wife that the cord was his solace and to please leave it alone.

When Chadbourne Pringle returned from work the next day, he found that the bedroom had been rearranged, the offending cord no longer a threat. For some people, the change would be refreshing; but for him it was bewildering since he had grown accustomed to responding instinctively to all the furniture and now had to re-program himself. In the end, Mr. Pringle decided to accept the change for fear that Miriam might do something even more eccentric if he pressed the matter.

For her part, Miriam felt relieved, assured that Chadbourne would at least die elsewhere under more natural circumstances. The first menace eliminated, she now devoted the next several years to worrying that the bank would be robbed and Chadborne caught in a cross-fire between FBI agents and the thieves. Each evening after supper, she searched the paper for accounts of bank robberies and then read them to her husband in what she considered her most dramatic style. She assumed that no explanation was needed for these frequent performances and gave none. Mr. Pringle failed to comprehend all this, putting it down to Miriam's fetish for the sensational. It was just like her fascination for the *National Enquirer*, which he condemned in public and read in private.

In Epson's Drug Store yesterday, Chadbourne Pringle had had an embarrassing experience. Actually, it was all related to the difficulty he and Miriam had in selecting Christmas presents for each other. Somehow, the presents were invariably wrong. Not that either one of them ever complained, for Chadbourne and Miriam Pringle had never had a real argument. Instead, they had emotional undercurrents. Once Mr. Pringle had given her a yellow sweater, not knowing that Miriam took exception to yellow, and she had refused to wear it. Some time later, however, having become angry over some now-forgotten matter, she put on the sweater for shock effect and wore it around the house all day. From then on, she used the sweater any time she was upset with him. Naturally, Mr. Pringle had finally broken the code and had come

to regard the sweater as his albatross. He didn't even know what colors she liked.

On another occasion, Mrs. Pringle had given her husband an album of Liberace records. For some reason, Mr. Pringle had felt vaguely insulted. Of course, Miriam and Mother Pringle listened to them regularly, the older woman having been a charter member of the Liberace Fan Club.

So Chadbourne Pringle had been startled when his wife had asked him to go Christmas shopping with her. It made him nervous since he always shopped alone and had his own system. In Epsom's he had had trouble with his glasses fogging up and was afraid he would knock over a display.

At first, Mr. Pringle was unaware that his wife was speaking to him. He was being assaulted by *Winter Wonderland* accompanied by a background of shoppers' hum.

"Chadbourne. Chadbourne." He finally focused on her. "This is what I want for Christmas. See, it's my favorite powder that I always buy. It's in a blue, rectangular box with white letters. You can't miss it."

Why was she telling him this? He wished she wouldn't talk so loud. Somebody might hear. Two teenaged girls, hiding behind a pyramid of cotton balls, had done just that. "Did you hear that?" said one. "She's showing him what to get her for Christmas." Both girls giggled and Mr. Pringle's glasses fogged up again.

Mrs. Pringle, preoccupied with her lecture on powder, was unaware of his discomfort. "Now I think I will go find a nice book to read over Christmas, and you can stay here. There's a sweet little saleslady behind the counter to take care of you."

Chadbourne Pringle was glad that the girls were gone and was greatly irritated with his wife. But he might as well get the powder in order to avoid another disastrous Christmas. He studied the saleslady's face as she wrapped the gift, trying to determine if she were part of the conspiracy.

Back in his bathroom, Chadbourne P. Pringle decided that yesterday was best forgotten. His eyes drifted from the mirror to the assorted items on the counter. He picked up Miriam's cucumber soap, which was pale green, octagonal, and which had "Old Mission" written on it. She had bought a bar upon the recommendation of Mother Pringle, who had read about it in *Farmer's Almanac* and who had hailed it as an indispensable beauty restorative. Mr. Pringle thought it was all nonsense, almost as bad as Liberace. Still, he did have to shave. He was tempted and no one would know. So Chadbourne Pringle began his new life that morning by locking the bathroom door and washing his

face with cucumber soap.

As he later said to himself, he didn't really want to do anything radical, for that was not his nature. So Mr. Pringle began to form a mental list of what he called "life-enhancement procedures." Finally, he decided to alter his reading habits to include fiction, an area about which he knew little. And he could discuss what he read with Miriam since she was something of an expert in the field. At least that was what he assumed since she was always buying novels at Epton's. She also had subscribed to *Reader's Digest Condensed Books* for fifteen years, so after supper Chadbourne Pringle visited their small library, which was smothered with the accumulated volumes, and began a systematic search for the right book. At last he selected one called *The Tightrope Walker*, volume 5, 1979, selection 2, he noted. This was just what he needed—a mystery. It would make his mind more agile.

When Miriam finally joined him in the sitting room after supper, he was well into the narrative. Spying the book, she paused warily before taking her seat. Mr. Pringle, who was glad she had given him time to get started, looked up. "I'm reading a novel," he announced brightly with a smile that made her uneasy.

"Oh, that's wonderful, dear. What is it about?"

"It's about a young woman who tries to solve a mystery. She opens a shop and has a hurdy-gurdy that somehow figures in a crime."

"I haven't read that one."

"Yes, it is fascinating what these modern writers can do." He reflected in the pose of a deep thinker. "Hurdy-gurdy. Why, that reminds me of my high school days when we read *Macbeth*. Don't you remember the witches when they're out somewhere chanting about the hurdy-gurdy being done and the battle lost and won?"

"What is a hurdy-gurdy?" she inquired.

"Why, it's what she has in her shop," he replied, flustered. "I'm sure the author was borrowing the idea from Shakespeare. All that superstition and killing and stuff."

Miriam Pringle wished her husband wouldn't talk about killing. There had been another bank robbery. Chadbourne Pringle was feeling warm and witty. He snuggled into his chair. The room embraced him approvingly. "When this woman looks in the hurdy-gurdy . . ."

"There was a bank robbery in Harrisonville yesterday," she interrupted solemnly.

"But, Miriam, I was talking about hurdy-gurdies and Shakespeare and . . ."

"Local police were searching for two armed men who robbed the branch bank of . . ."

Chadbourne P. Pringle clamped his lips and shifted his weight in the chair. The room frowned. He had miscalculated Miriam's interests. Perhaps she preferred non fiction. He found it difficult to concentrate on the novel because she was trying to dramatize the scene inside the bank.

". . . quoted teller Percival Sawyer as saying that the men looked desperate. 'They would have shot me had I made a wrong move,' " he claimed. Miriam Pringle turned pale. "See, dear. He even has your middle name."

Mr. Pringle wasn't listening. He was plotting a trip to the library tomorrow to find a different book. One must be adaptable and patient, he concluded.

The next night the scene was repeated. "I have been reading the most interesting book about nature," declared Mr. Pringle.

Mrs. Pringle, wondering what had happened to the hurdy-gurdy, lifted her head from the paper and stared at him. She was becoming suspicious. Perhaps her husband was getting a virus.

"Did you know that bees are among the best friends we have, Miriam? And not only do they pollinate our flowers, but some doctors now think that their sting might be beneficial in treating arthritis."

Miriam returned to the paper. Unfortunately, she had been unable to locate any bank robberies.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to get relief from that? Uh, don't you have a touch of arthritis in your hands, Miriam?"

Mrs. Pringle dropped the paper in her lap. "Chadbourne, are you suggesting that I might wish to be stung by a bee?" Privately, she was convinced that the cucumber soap might do the job less painfully. Even more privately, she began to worry that Chadbourne might be allergic to insect bites. One sting and it would all be over.

"No, no, of course not," he sputtered. It's just that if you were working in the flowers next spring and one landed on your hands, you might try not to resist just to see if it works."

Miriam Pringle gasped and rose quickly from the chair. She had never seen him like this. Perhaps it was worse than a virus. It might be the male menopause.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To call Mother Pringle. I . . . I need her advice on a matter."

To call Mother Pringle. That was the last thing he wanted. Mr. Pringle couldn't understand why Miriam wasn't interested in his reading. It had seemed so exciting to him.

The next morning at the bank, Chadbourne P. Pringle uncharacteristically let his mind wander from his duties. His attempt to become an

avid reader and astound Miriam had obviously failed. What to do? One thing was certain: he could no longer include her in his plans. He must do his own thing, be individualistic.

Actually, the next step was easier than he thought. While shopping after work, Mr. Pringle passed a sporting goods store and saw jogging equipment in the window. Now, he pondered, there is something one can do by himself. Besides, Dr. Bird had been encouraging him to get more exercise and would be pleased. The clerk in the store was amazed at how quickly he made the sale. Although Chadbourne Pringle knew money, he did not know warmup suits and left with a \$48.00 Nike outfit. The suit was appropriate, he told himself. Dark blue. Mr. Pringle grinned and got a wild look in his eyes. He could even wear it around the house. He might even dare to do so the next time Mother Pringle visited to hear Liberace.

After supper, Chadbourne P. Pringle secluded himself in the bedroom to make plans. Now that he had decided to become a jogger, he must make sure that nothing went wrong. On a legal pad he wrote in three columns:

EQUIPMENT	TIME	DISTANCE
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The equipment was no problem since he had just bought the warmup suit and already had tennis shoes bought on vacation from Pic 'n Pay. Time. He must be careful here. He didn't want too many spectators watching his first excursion. So it had to be at night. But what day? Saturday was out because teenagers prowled the streets in their cars. Sunday? That was it. And he would wait until dark, no, even later. He wrote "8:00" on the paper. And he wouldn't even miss his bedtime.

Distance. Somewhere, Mr. Pringle had heard that six blocks equaled a mile. But he thought that a bit long; besides, it would take him into congested areas no matter which direction he chose. Chadbourne Pringle fretted. He wanted to stay close to home at least the first few times. He could go around the block. Yes, that would be just fine because if he got tired he could cut back to his house by a short cut, although he had to admit that he wasn't sure there were short cuts in the neighborhood.

Something was missing. Of course. He must prepare for the unexpected. In a fourth column he wrote "Contingencies." And just what were the contingencies? Dogs? The city had a leash law. McNulty had two small dogs that he sometimes let out, but at 8:00 on Sunday night they would be inside. What about McNulty himself? A retired man, McNulty had ordained himself captain of the Community Watch program. It seemed lost on him that no such program existed in the neighborhood. Chadbourne Pringle considered him a meddler. What if

McNulty saw him jog by? Mr. Pringle decided to do speed work when he reached McNulty's house.

Cats? He hated cats. They were sleek and sinister. The Silversteins next door had three, one a black Manx that seemed particularly malicious toward him. Mr. Pringle's hand hesitated over the paper; then he decided not to list cats. At worst, they would probably hide in the shadows, hiss, and think evil thoughts about him.

Chadbourne P. Pringle laid aside the pen and looked satisfied. One could never be too cautious, he thought. Coaches always had a game plan and now he had one. Success was inevitable. He was in control of the things he could control. Then he frowned. What about Miriam? He had not yet apprised her of his plan and was convinced that the later she knew, the better. He had told her at supper that he was going to take up walking, and she might become agitated if he revealed the truth. Miriam might even put on the old sweater and make him feel guilty, and he couldn't stand that.

On Sunday evening, Chadbourne Pringle was nervous. He squirmed, eel-like, while watching **Sixty Minutes**. Three times he went to the kitchen for water—to guard against dehydration. The more restless he became, the more apprehensive Miriam felt. She was losing Mike Wallace.

Mr. Pringle jumped up. "I've got to get dressed for my run."

Mrs. Pringle's mouth flew open. "For your what? I thought you were going for a walk." Her glasses threatened to fall into her lap.

Trapped. "Well, I just thought I would mix it up a little, just to see, uh, just as a kind of an experiment." Why hadn't he been more careful.

"Chadbourne," she retorted, now on her feet, "I never knew you were the experimental type. You might have a seizure."

He remembered his boyhood. Mother Pringle would stand in the yard, looking until she found him. "Chadbourne, stop all that running, dear. You might get hot."

He started upstairs, thinking that it would be nice to get hot for a change. Stripping to his boxer shorts, Mr. Pringle pulled over them the bermudas Miriam had given him one Christmas. In high school gym class, he had been humiliated when his undershorts showed beneath his gym trunks. Everybody had laughed and pointed.

Then the warmup, which clung to his body like Handi Wrap. He pulled at the suit and then surveyed himself in the mirror. What were the zippers on the pants for? Should they be opened or closed? It wasn't time to start yet. Have to stay up here, he thought, Can't face Miriam again. What to do? Maybe he should warm up, stretch a little like he

had seen them do on exercise shows. Mr. Pringle tried to touch his toes and felt a pain in his legs. He wasn't ready for that. He would run in place—that was it. Up and down, up and down, feet banging on the floor. Then he heard a knock on the door. "Chadbourne, what are you doing in there? The house is trembling. Are you all right?"

"I am warming up," he shouted over the thudding of his feet.

"Chadbourne, I wish you wouldn't do that. You might break something."

Chadbourne P. Pringle was ready to stop anyway. Sweat tears had formed on his forehead and he was puffing. It still wasn't time to run but he had to get out of the bedroom. It was already dark, so he would change plans and go now. Throwing open the door, he scurried down the stairs ahead of a surprised wife and unlocked the front door. A gust of cold night air struck him rudely. Why hadn't he listed weather? He would need a hat to guard against catching cold, but the only hats he had were those he wore to work. He would look ludicrous in a fedora. The occasion called for a toboggan, but he had none. What about his nightcap? It could pass for a toboggan, and, besides, no one was likely to tell the difference in the dark.

Miriam Pringle, who had followed her husband outside, was startled when he hurried back in and returned wearing his nightcap. Her hand went to her mouth to silence a gasp. Then Chadbourne P. Pringle was on the sidewalk, his great moment a reality, and he was moving into the shadows at a pace that could neither be described as a walk nor a run—maybe a shuffle or an agitation of the body.

Ahead, the sidewalk was lined with young oaks whose limbs formed a canopy. Mr. Pringle thought it looked like a tunnel. He could see streaks of light breaking through and could sense the Sunday night stillness. He felt secure, embraced by some great god of nature who would protect him and supply reinvigoration.

At the end of the block, Mr. Pringle turned right. This was McNulty's block, and ahead Chadbourne Pringle could see the lights from McNulty's house. He was beginning to breath hard, but his legs were strong and his resolve was firm. Maybe the old man wouldn't notice. But there in the yard stood McNulty with his dogs, and he saw Mr. Pringle coming. What he actually saw was a suspicious figure in a dark costume topped by a head covering resembling a Santa Claus hat. McNulty retreated to his porch steps and tried to clear his eyes. The dogs growled and stuck their tails up.

"Who are you out there?" he shrilled.

As if the gods had issued instructions, Mr. Pringle collapsed to a stop. Speed work was out of the question now. He would try to calm McNulty by slowing to a walk. One must be cautious around eccentrics.

"You answer me," demanded the old man. "What are you doing on

my sidewalk? Why are you wearing that costume?"

"Damn!" muttered Pringle. This, for him, was a remarkable thing to say since he never cursed except to himself. It made him feel guilty.

Mr. Pringle began to walk. "Go get him," yelled McNulty. To Chadbourne Pringle's horror, the two dogs raced through the yard like beasts of prey chasing a victim. He froze, paralyzed by fear. The dogs slid to a stop in front of him, barred his way, and filled the night with an assortment of threatening barks, growls, and whines. Nothing like this had ever happened to Chadbourne P. Pringle at the bank. He had never even been robbed.

"Don't you move, you hear," ordered McNulty. "I want some answers or I'm calling the police."

Oh, lord, thought Mr. Pringle. What would Miriam think if the police arrested him. She would have to go down to the station and explain everything. She would wear the old sweater and embarrass him even more. What to do? He could easily identify himself to McNulty and get on with the jogging, but that would give the old man a story to spread all over the neighborhood. Chadbourne P. Pringle running around the block in a dark costume on Sunday night. Miriam would get phone calls. Mother Pringle would suggest a conference. Best to remain anonymous and take a chance that McNulty was bluffing. But the dogs. What to do? Since they were doing little more than making noises, Mr. Pringle chose to go on the offensive. Spreading his arms like a big bird, he unleashed the most hideous yell his voice could command. The dogs, surprised, yipped once more and fled to the porch, followed by McNulty, whose threatening words had never matched his inner resolve. Chadbourne Pringle, seizing the opportunity, began speed work. McNulty, stung, craned his neck and fired a parting shot. "I know what you are. I recognized you from the beginning. You're one of those cat burglars. You stay away from my house."

Mr. Pringle kept running, but not for long. He was beginning to ache all over and his breathing, stimulated by the excitement, was labored. But he felt elated by his handling of the crisis. He bet that old McNulty would never call the police but would brag all over the neighborhood about how he had chased away a cat burglar.

Several cars passed while he recuperated. Then he was off again, flapping his arms occasionally in commemoration of the victory. Soon, however, he sensed that something was following him, car lights behind that kept peering at him. Looking over his shoulder, Mr. Pringle spied a large, dark vehicle creeping toward him. Mr. Pringle became jittery. Maybe McNulty had called the police after all. Finally the car pulled abreast and the driver leaned toward the opposite window and stared, hawk-like, at Chadbourne Pringle. Mr. Pringle wondered if

there were a short cut nearby. But before he could look, someone spoke through the window.

"Brother Pringle, is that you?" came the shrill voice. Mr. Pringle, hearing his name, stopped. A chill ran over his body. The driver pulled to the curb, cut the engine, and slithered up to him. "Good evening, brother Pringle. I was just returning from services when I saw you. At least I thought I recognized you. We had a glorious worship tonight, I want you to know. Three people were saved and Hannah York rededicated. When I saw you I heard the Lord telling me to stop and witness because I know you have needs that only He can meet. And it is such a beautiful evening that the Almighty has given us."

Mr. Pringle, his excitement now complicated by fogged glasses, tried to take all this in. He couldn't make out the face, but he had heard the voice before. He removed his glasses and wiped them on his jacket. At least he could see better. Then he looked at the face again and recognized Albert Renshaw, the preacher who had started a church in an abandoned pool hall on South Wentworth. Renshaw, inspired by a television evangelist, had declared himself ready to preach the gospel. He had visited the Pringles twice, much to Mr. Pringle's irritation, trying to get them to join his church. Not that Chadbourne Pringle was against religion; he was just opposed to Albert Renshaw. What to do? There was nothing on his list about religious fanatics.

Mr. Pringle decided that the best defense was to keep jogging. Renshaw probably got his only exercise passing the plate. He began to shuffle and was chagrined to see that the preacher kept up by walking.

"I must compliment you, brother Pringle. The Bible says that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and here you are glorifying God by taking care of your body. Oh, when I think of all the lost souls who corrupt themselves with gin and drugs and that godless **Playboy** magazine, I fall on my knees and pray for the strength to wage holy war. He will deliver us from iniquity and cleanse us from all sin."

Chadbourne P. Pringle felt giddy. Why was this happening to him? Renshaw seemed determined to follow him all the way home, and they were already nearing the end of the block.

"Now, brother Pringle, I always believe in speaking what is on my heart, and I know you wouldn't respect me if I did not heed His voice. This is the Lord's day. On the seventh day He rested, the Bible says. We had services tonight and the Lord willed that we all be together in the fellowship. Remember the sabbath to keep it holy. He told it all to Moses there in the good book. We ought not to be doing something

else on His day, brother Pringle. You and the little lady come join us and God will forgive you and bless many times over . . .”

Mr. Pringle wheezed.

“I was just saying to my wife the other night what valuable members you would be . . .” Chadbourne Pringle’s heart had become a hammer. He wished he had heart pills. Then he remembered that he had no heart condition. At that moment it would be nice if he did just so he could take something—anything. He would love to have some of that gin Renshaw had condemned. Then he was vaguely aware that Renshaw was no longer with him. Mr. Pringle stopped and saw the preacher getting back into his car, the glow of a cigarette making a red hole in the shadows. Mr. Pringle heard the roar of an engine.

The next time, he would have to plan more carefully. He would choose a new route for sure. Now Chadbourne P. Pringle entered the final block. He was going to make it. Even the worst that life had to offer could not possibly deal him a third blow.

Shortly, he could see the lights of his house in mid-block. His shuffle seeming like a run, Mr. Pringle decided to walk the rest of the way—slowly. One must warm down, he reminded himself. He also needed to appear in control when he faced Miriam. Miriam adored control.

Mr. Pringle noticed that the Silversteins had placed their garbage out for Monday pickup. He must remember to do the same. One must not forget his obligations in the pursuit of pleasure. Just as he reached the edge of the Silversteins’ yard, Chadbourne Pringle noticed their black cat slinking toward the street from the shrubbery. The two reached the sidewalk at the same time and both froze. When he tried to walk around the animal, the cat moved in the same direction. He changed direction and she, frantically trying to avoid the man, became entangled in his feet. Chadbourne Pringle lost his balance, reached for support from a garbage can, and fell, knocking both cans over with a clamor that would have rivalled Renshaw at his best. Mr. Pringle lay there, dazed. Then, he managed to get on all fours and finally got to his feet. He felt something slimy on his hand and wiped it on his jacket, leaving a yellow smear. To get home, to get home. That’s all he wanted. Even Miriam would be better than this. Apparently, she had heard the noise, for she was standing in the doorway, wearing the old sweater, mismatched with a pleated purple skirt.

“Chadbourne, did you knock over the Silversteins’ garbage cans? What happened to you? What is that on your jacket? Did you throw up?”

Mr. Pringle glared at his wife. He could never remember having

done that and it made him feel better. Besides, it was much easier at the moment to glare than to speak. He hoped that his fogged glasses created a shocking effect.

For Chadbourne P. Pringle, the night had been a disaster. The next morning at the bank, Mr. Angleton was astounded to get a call from Miriam Pringle to inform him that her husband was ill and would not be at work. This created a day-long stir among the other tellers since Mr. Pringle never missed work. Mr. Angleton told Mrs. Dolby that he was considering a bedside visit.

Mr. Pringle pulled the covers tightly under his chin. No, he had told Miriam, he would under no circumstances see Dr. Bird. He was not injured, he was not sick. He was simply taking a well-deserved holiday. So Miriam had called Mother Pringle and they had gone shopping for medicine that might resurrect the patient. Mother Pringle said that her son needed Doan's Pills. It had to be his back. That's what it always was.

In just a moment he would get up—while they were gone. There were a few items around the house that he wanted to bundle up and put out with the garbage. Chadbourne Pringle let his mind wander. He felt warm under the covers. He wondered what it would be like to grow a beard. Ah, yes. He would decide tomorrow at the bank.

IDIOSYNCRASIES

Winter comes
there's no reasoning left

Palled skies
with bereft branches raised

Pleading for
the breath, sound, sun!

Another morn
drinking framboise on the rocks

Minutes slipping
while the whiteness veils the face

and yet it comes
it's icy hand caressing, soothing, enveloping

Stillness follows,
unfathomable, unyielding, as life's strains drift.

BRIAN

Bored, sleepy eyes
piercing keenly
into unprecedented depths.
Languid thoughts,
slow, perceiving,
autocratically concealing.
Carefree words
from poignant thoughts
meticulously flung.
Docile expression
checking time,
awaiting the moment.
Challenging adventure,
for the sophisticated,
leaving hearts engulfed and minds enraged.



BUILDING WALLS

As I sit
I see
people hearing not feeling
but
numbness passes with sleep
So much to hurt for
No time to feel
release
How long can the building go on

Trapped
Separated from the field
by one brick

Trapped
Separated from the sun
by one stone

As I walk
I ponder
thoughts like birds' wings
that beat frantically
against clear glass
tiring
forever trying yet never knowing
the truth

As I lie
I shut my eyes to close out
the darkness
my wings tired
from beating against
my heart

THE FALLS

Follow me down
from the water to
 the rocks
 where they lie resting
Sounds of continually
flowing whispers
 washing over them
Great is the rush
 but like age
 slows as it reaches
ending when it mingles
 with another
Parts become whole
when they long for unity
This called until
 face turned away
I was caught earthbound

PENLAND IMPRESSION

I sat by the window
 feeling a part of
 the tree in the yard

Feelings of
 helplessness like drifting
wood
Caught inside
Seeing out at the real world

When a breeze
 blew
 hard on the leaves of my thought
Piling like so much dust
 or was it
Clay from a creek above
the hollow
 of the valley

Here it was peaceful



HOW TO BE MISERABLE

Choose a lover who is never faithful.
Believe his lies.
Wait by the phone for calls that never come.
Complain to your friends about how he mistreats you.
Never take their advice.
Ache with loneliness.
Cry.
Check his phone to see if it's busy.
Check his house to see if he's "busy".
Refuse to date other men who might treat you better.
You know you can never find another lover like him.
Cry.
Sit at home alone.
Review every date, every conversation with him.
Try to discover what you did wrong.
Stay alone.
Cry.

HATTERAS TRAIL

Fine blue bodies like parentheses
interrupt the symmetry of webs.
The burden of wings is gone,
picked to nothingness by spider tusks.

Keepers of order sit within the kingdoms
of their own secretions.
Narrow bands of black and gold
in eight-pronged conformity
defend perimeters against the winged blue
of dragonflies,
sucking them to husks,
discarding them like parentheses
in the history of web-worlds.

Of course,
logical conclusion for those
who ignore patterns of order
spun by those without wings.





Reflections

